

COLONNADE

LONGWOOD COLLEGE - SPRING 1963

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Colonnade

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CONTENTS

<i>Meat in Due Season</i>	
Short Story.....	Ginny Gilmore 4
ILLUSTRATION.....	Judy Cooper..... 5
<i>Théâtre</i>	
Review.....	Ann Evans..... 10
ILLUSTRATION	Dottie Kaiser..... 12
<i>Alter Ego, Poem.....</i>	Alice Joy Peele..... 13
<i>Richmond Renaissance</i>	
Essay.....	Betty Farley..... 14
<i>Impressions.....</i>	Sharon Coulter 27
<i>Reach up in Darkness</i>	
Short Story.....	Margaret Cooke..... 28
ILLUSTRATION.....	Pat Kowalski..... 29
COVER BY PAT KOWALSKI	

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MEAT IN DUE SEASON

by
Ginny Gilmore

Winter that year was a harsh one. Old Sandoval would have said that Changing Woman was angry with her people and was punishing them. My father just said it was a hard year for the Navajo.

That was the year I started school. I was not happy there, because I had been brought up in the basin with few children near my own age to play with. My entire world had consisted of those few scattered houses, the Government Agencies Office and the well-preserved ruins—all that was left of an Indian culture that had flourished in the Southwest long before the white man had settled along the eastern coast. My family had moved there before I was born and remained until my father completed a series of research studies for the government.

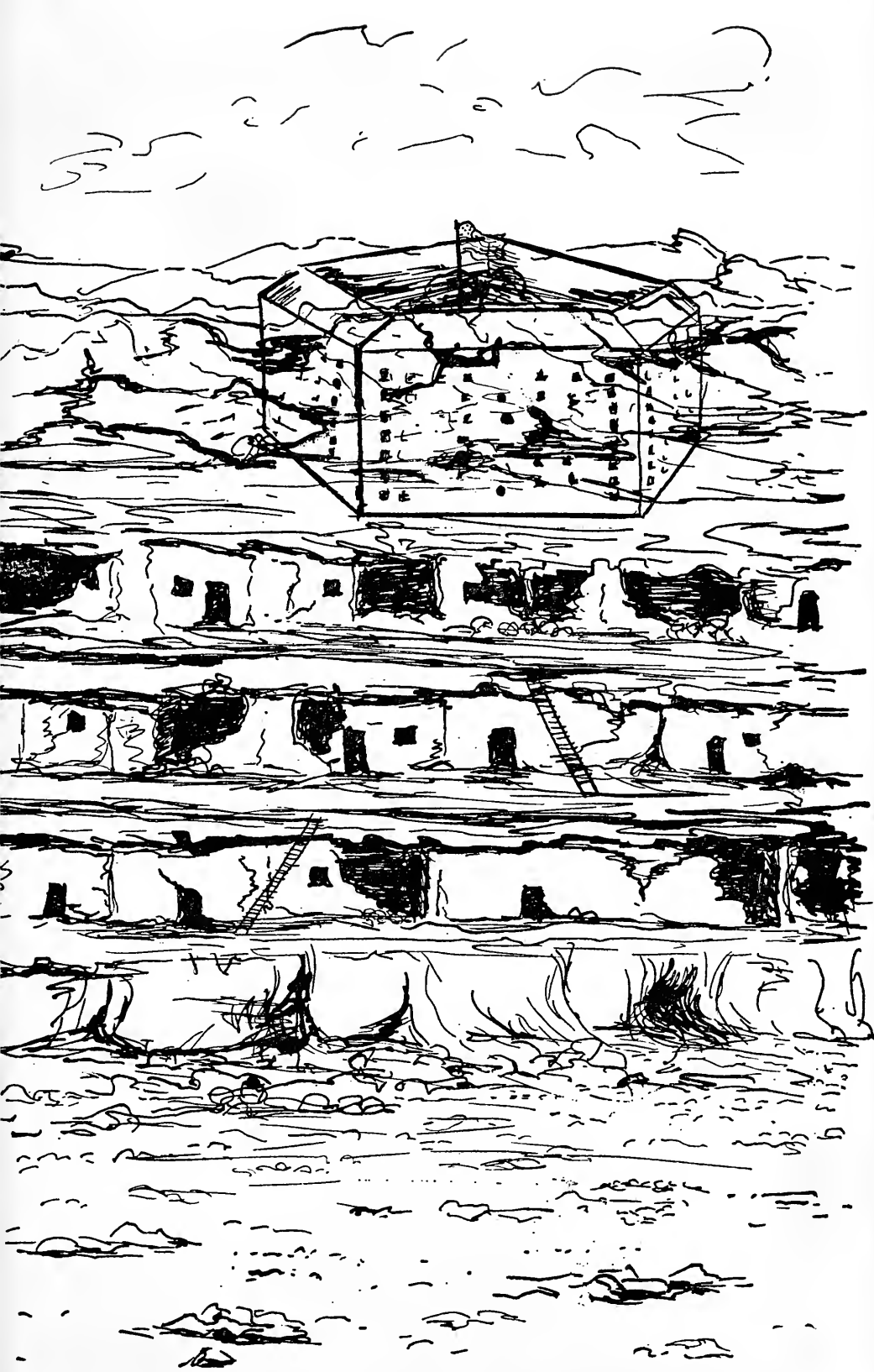
The basin was a comforting little world. It was accessible only by a narrow switchback that wound aimlessly down the steep ridge. In the eroded hollows of the canyon wall behind us were the old Pueblo dwellings, hidden from our sight by the thick groves of scrub oak and sage. The dwellings, intricate apartments of disintegrating adobe, were what had brought us to this remote area. My father was an archeologist, and the lost and mysterious life that had once existed here was his life. In those early years I often went with him up the narrow trails that jutted out from the smooth-sanded canyon walls.

Had anyone asked me then what my father did for a living, I would have been unable to say. I could never associate the unraveling of this fantastic and mysterious legend with work. I could see others who lived in the basin go about their work with the rigorous solemnity that I saw in my mother as she hustled about the kitchen preparing dinner, but in my father I could see none of this. The compilation of fact, the careful sorting of details, the writing and rewriting—this was not his work but his pleasure.

Above the basin was a scattered group of Navajo hogans. The primitive life of the people that lived there went on as it had for centuries before—partly out of necessity, partly because of the tourist trade their way of life brought, but most of all, because of the love they had for their heritage. Their lives were geared to the droves of tourists who came to see the crumbling ruins of the cliff dwellers. Their skillfully woven blankets and ornate silver and turquoise jewelry brought higher prices from the wealthy visitors than they would have from the Indian Agency had they lived on the reservation.

These people were a source of fascination to me. I would spend my

(continued on page 6)



days watching Old Sandoval, the eldest, sit with his silverwork before him and listen to him tell of the folklore and traditions of his tribe. In him, as in my father, I found compensation for the lack of friends my own age.

I never heard anyone speak of him without adding the "Old" before his name. He had been "Old" Sandoval for as long as anyone in the Government Agencies Office could remember. No one knew his last name or even if he had one.

For all appearances he was the traditional Navajo one finds in all western history books. His iron grey hair was bobbed short in front and the long back piece was wound up in a black strip of wool. His wealth was displayed in the heavy jewelry he wore around his wrists and neck. Even during the hot summer months he was dressed in a velvet shirt with thick denim trousers. This, he would explain to my amazement, was to keep the sun off of him and to prevent him from getting hot. The skin on his exposed face and hands was as smooth and red as tanned leather. It was stretched tightly over his massive bone structure and wrinkled over his flat cheeks whenever he laughed or smiled.

He would close his shop when the government agency closed and would walk home with my father. Those few minutes before my father came in to supper were spent smoking and talking. I was not included in these conversations, but listened to the drone of their voices as I set the table and brought the food in from the kitchen.

The bond between the two was something else I could never understand. They made an odd pair—my father in his plaid shirt and worn sport coat lounging against the porch railing while the old Indian sat on the steps with his knees up almost under his chin. I never knew what it was that brought the two together in the first place. Although the Navajo settlement and the group of government homes were near each other, the two cultures rarely mixed except on matters of business. New families that moved into our community would be drawn by the mystery and ceremony that surrounded the Navajos, but the interest wore off in time.

Old Sandoval and I would talk mainly about the past history of the Navajos. I would question him and he would thrill to answer me, laughing at my ignorance. His family also fascinated me. The entire group was related in some way.

"Joe is your son, isn't he?" I would ask, trying to straighten out his family tree in my mind.

"Yes, but his name is Hosteen. When he went away to school on the reservation he was called by an Anglo name. I named him a Navajo name."

MEAT IN DUE SEASON

"Then did they give you an Anglo name when you went to school?" I would press him further.

"No," he would laugh. "When I was young there was no school."

"Then how did you learn anything?"

"I learned from the elders. I learned of the ways of the gods and how to please them. I learned how to make my body strong. In the wintertime I would go out each morning before the sun came out and roll in the snow. Then I would not get sick. No one learns these things now. I would learn hand trembling and how to chant. . ."

"I heard you chant last night," I would interrupt, unable to keep still through the long monologues he would often lapse into. "Up by the ruins. My father says you are praying. Do you believe all those gods are really up there?"

Here he would throw back his massive head and laugh again. "Who's to know what's up there? I'm just an old man. I like to scare the tourists that way." Then we would laugh together, sharing a secret no one was to know of but the two of us.

All this was before that winter came and school started. After that last summer, all this was lost to me.

I remember very little about that first year of school. My most vivid memory was of the long walk up to the top of the basin each morning to catch the school bus. Never was there a winter so cold or dry as that one. The high canyon walls no longer offered the protection that their appearance boasted. The raw bitter wind swept down on us, throwing up the finely ground dust and swirling it into mists. It would force my eyes closed and catch in my mouth as I gasped for breath.

No cold is as bitter as a dry cold. That summer had been dry and unproductive, and the winter that followed was even dryer. There was another bitterness I experienced that winter—something more than I could understand at the time or that I have since been able to comprehend. The change was something that didn't really involve me, but left me with a feeling of guilt and inadequacy. After that winter I was no longer a part of the world that included Old Sandoval and his people. I was a white girl and was left on the outside looking in.

When the coldness hit its peak, I came down with pneumonia and had to stay home from school. My mother put me to bed in the room right off the living room where she could keep me as warm as possible.

No word came from the Navajo clan. I had not seen Old Sandoval or the others since I started going to school.

My father patiently explained to me how the Navajos had survived worse winters than these. I was not satisfied with this. I had heard only too often how Sandoval deplored the softness of his people. He blamed the laziness on the school they had been forced to attend.

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My father did not offer to go to the Navajo community, nor did I ask him to. Sandoval's pride was well known to both of us. I could only wait and wonder.

Then one night he did come. The family had just finished dinner and my mother was clearing the table when I heard the muffled steps on the porch and the hesitant rap on the door. My father answered it, and I recognized Old Sandoval's deep, broken monotone.

"I have to talk to you. It is of great importance."

My father's surprised assent was hardly audible through the door of my room. I slipped to the floor, pulled a blanket around me and crept silently towards the door. Slowly and silently I pushed the door open a crack. From where I sat I could see the fire in the fireplace which was kept blazing from early morning until bedtime.

"Hosteen died tonight. His wife has come to me."

There was a pause before my father's awkward response. "I'm sorry for you all. I will take care of his burial."

I felt a sharp pain at the matter-of-fact answer my father made, but was relieved that he spared the old Navajo the humility of asking for assistance in a matter like this. The Navajos' fear of a dead body in the same house with him was something few white men could understand. A death in the family was twice as fearful. I knew that by morning Hosteen's home would be deserted and no Navajo would enter it again. Old Sandoval had been left with the task of disposing of his son's body, not because he was his father, but because he was the oldest member of his family and had lived a full life. Now the detestable task had been left to my father by his own choice.

"I did not come to talk of that. Hosteen is my son, but there are others. Many will die. There is not enough food. It gets colder each day." Through the crack in the door I could see Old Sandoval walk across to the fireplace. Only in his lined, rust-colored face could I see the grief his son's death had brought to him.

"We also have many who are sick," was my father's answer. "Even my daughter."

I jumped at the mention of my illness.

"Ah, but it isn't the same." Old Sandoval's rising voice filled the room with contempt. "You are an Anglo. You work for the U. S. Government." Old Sandoval turned his back on my father, placing his hands on the mantel and staring into the fire.

"You know the government does the best it can for your people. Living off the reservation makes it harder for them." My father walked toward the old man. The feeble explanation my father offered was not adequate to reach across the widening gulf between the two.

"Can any man live that way? It is not right." Sandoval swung

MEAT IN DUE SEASON

around to face my father, his voice crackling with agitation.

"It is all we can do for the present." My father's weary reply came back like the voice of an old man.

"I have come to you to ask for help." The old man's voice was low with pleading and shame. His eyes searched my father's for understanding.

"What can I do? I'm just one man," my father's desperate response came back. His face was contorted with pain and helplessness.

"You are an Anglo. You work for the U. S. Government." The repetition of the dry statement seemed more than adequate for the Indian. I watched them as they wandered past the crack in the door, like two men trying to find each other in the dark.

My father let out a low sigh. "I am an archeologist. I do research on the cliff dwellers for the Government. I write books about them."

Sandoval turned as if he had been struck. "Books! What good are your books? My people die and you write books!"

My father flinched at the onslaught of bitterness. He turned, sliding his hands into his pockets with an air of finality. "I'm sorry. I can't help you. If you were on the reservation the people there could help you. . ." My father's voice droned on into oblivion.

There was a long pause and I could hear the Indian's moccasined feet whisper across the floor. He stood again in front of the fire, his shoulders sloped and his head bent.

"After your people conquered my people for the last time. My father was a young man then, and he has told me of it. After they marched my people from the fort in our land to the reservation in this useless land, they told us what we could do and what we couldn't do. The elders tied a goat to a tree. The goat butted against the tree. He couldn't get loose. He couldn't knock the tree down. All the men walked by the goat and the tree and watched him butt. The elders told my people that the goat was the Navajo people and the tree was the U. S. Government. My father told me of this. This is the way it is."

There was a silence after the old Navajo made his speech. I shivered and pulled the blanket tighter around my shoulders. I listened to my father's footsteps as he paced slowly across the room out of my view.

"There will be a time, Old Sandoval." My father's hushed voice broke the echo of the old man's high pitched tremor on my eardrums.

"That time won't be my time," Old Sandoval's voice dropped again to that deep monotone. "I must go back to the wife of my son."

"I will take care of Hosteen," my father added quickly.

"His people will bury him," Old Sandoval's answer came back hard and harsh.

The door opened and I could hear the howl of the wind outside.

THÉÂTRE

by

Ann Evans

IN *Théâtre*, a collection of four of his best-known plays, French author, Jean-Paul Sartre presents in a clear, straightforward style, the essence of his existentialist beliefs and makes this book more than just a collection of plays. It is an attempt to explain, through exemplar, Sartre's existentialism.

All of these plays are written in a clear, explicit style. The words the characters speak are simple, common words of the man-on-the-street. Nowhere is there a long, philosophical monologue or oration employing philosophical terms which leave even the philosopher in doubt as to their meaning. Sartre states his beliefs in simple sentences, as will be shown later. His plots are simple, never involving more than one place or one time—the town of Argos, a room in Hell, a prison, and a bedroom. His plays are short. In the two hundred ninety-eight pages of this book, Sartre has given the reader one three-act play, one two-act play, and two one-act plays. Thus, concisely, in simple terms, and without complex plots does Sartre expound his existentialism for the common man.

The first play, "Les Mouches (The Flies)," lays the foundation for Sartre's existentialist belief by distinguishing between unconscious beings who exist *in themselves* and conscious beings who, by transcending the present time and place and existing *for themselves*, are free. Electra, the sister, is an example of one who lives *in himself*. She dreamed for years about her brother's physical and mental prowess and about how together they would kill the king and queen and rule Argos. But, when her dreams came true, she collapsed. She preferred living inside herself to living outside herself. Orestes, the brother, on the other hand, when he realizes that he is free, transcends the time and place and exists *for himself*. He knows he is free, and neither mortal nor god (Zeus) can bind him. Therefore, he feels no guilt after murdering his mother and stepfather. Zeus says, "Once freedom lights its beacon in a man's heart, the gods are powerless against him. It's a matter between man and man, and it is for other men, and for them only, to let him go his gait, or to throttle him."

This leads the reader to the second play, "Huis-Clos (No Exit)," and the next step in existentialism: an insistence on the loneliness of the human soul and the need to preserve this loneliness from others who would encroach upon it or restrict it. Two women and a man find

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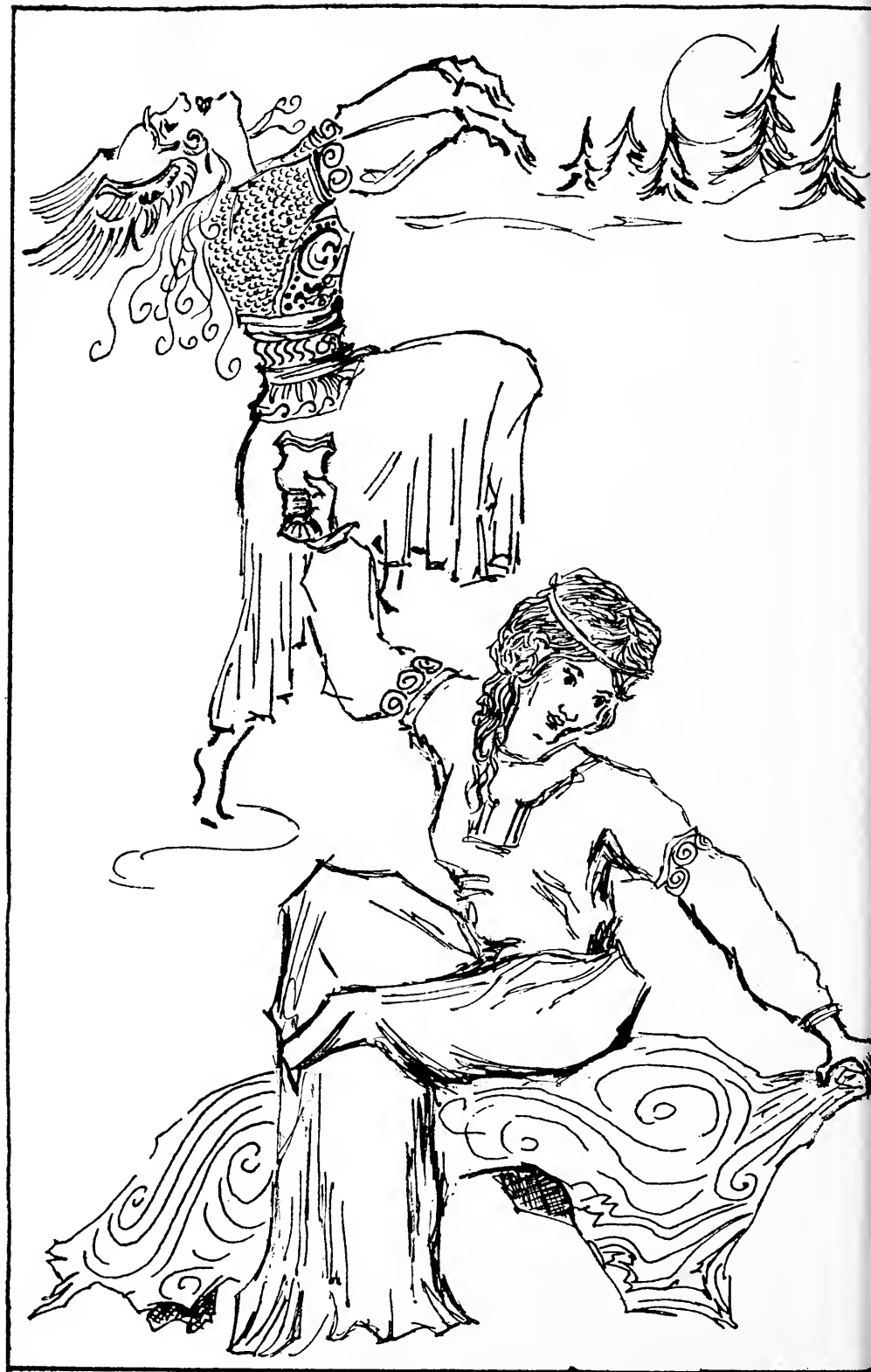
THÉÂTRE

themselves in a room in Hell together. Attracted to, yet at the same time repelled from, each other, they realize that they will never be alone again and that their doom is each other. "Hell," the man says, "is other people."

"Morts Sans Sepulture (Death Without Burial)" emphasizes Sartre's view of the place of will in human nature as contrasted with reason. Canoris, Henri, Lucie, and other comrades are in prison. They are given an opportunity to live by revealing the name of the leader of their rebel group and the location of his hideout. Canoris gets no response when he tries to reason with Lucie. It is only when she hears the rain and thunder and sees the lightening for the first time in months that she remembers what it is to live. She cries, "I want to live, I want to live." Only by reawakening her will to live, her responses to life, would she concede to talk. Will had triumphed where reasoning had failed.

The last play in this book, "La Putain Respectueuse (Respectful Prostitute)" presents the basic theme of all existentialist writers. Such writers, including Sartre in this play, protest views of the world and policies of action in which individual human beings are regarded as helpless playthings of historical forces or as being wholly determined by the regular operation of natural processes. Here is the age-old problem of the Southern United States. Lizzie, the white, non-southern prostitute, refuses to condemn a Negro for violating her because he didn't. The white people need a reason for lynching the Negro. Her reason for not condemning him is that he is a man. "Never will I give a man to the chickens" [literally]. No matter how hard she tries, however, the Negro is killed according to the Chivalric Code of the South. Man is a helpless plaything. Lizzie could do nothing.

Thus, in four plays, Sartre has presented simply and concisely his existentialist beliefs. Reading through these four plays in the order in which they appear, the layman is able to move from a simply stated existentialist belief, through Sartre's own particular beliefs, to the basic doctrine underlying all existentialism. *Théâtre* is a handbook of existentialism for the common man. It contains the essence of Sartre's belief.



ALTER EGO

I grasp the cup and drain it of
its luminous liquid
As the night-wind beats against me,
whispering of formless delight.
Then, under a swollen moon dominating
the silvered landscape,

I,

a thing possessed by Druid spirits,
a vessel lithe and bright,
Dance an adagio in the cave of the night. . . .
The pale moon-shadows flicker madly in harmony
with the wild music of the moon,
And dance I on, abandonedly, until the wind ceases
and the music dies ———

Then while the lifeless stars glow mockingly,
with a frenzied sob,
I must break the cup and fall in the dust
of the old gods,
Their flames long cold.

—ALICE JOY PEELE

RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

Betty Farley

This article represents independent research conducted by Miss Betty Farley as a participant in the Honors program at Longwood College. She first became interested in the Virginia Writer's Club when, as a research assistant to Dr. Dorothy Schlegel, she came upon many articles in the Richmond newspapers of the twenties commenting upon the activities of this unusual little coterie, which made Richmond, for a time, a literary center in the United States.

Newspaperman and critic H. L. Mencken began to rub the literary nose of the South into the dirt for the first time in November, 1917, with the initial appearance of his "The Sahara of the Bozart" in the New York *Evening Mail*. This essay, expanded once for publication in the *Smart Set* and again for his *Prejudices: Second Series* in 1920, criticized the South as being "almost as sterile artistically, intellectually, culturally as the Sahara Desert."¹ In addition, he stated that Virginia, the state that he considered the best of the South, "has no art, no literature, no philosophy, no mind or aspiration of her own."² "Mencken's 'Sahara of the Bozart', which might have been passed over or an amusing literary jibe, pricked Southern skins from Richmond to El Paso."³

At the time of the termination of World War I, Richmond, Virginia, was a literary microcosm of the entire South. After the almost arid period that occurred between the Southern romanticists and the appearance of such writers as James Branch Cabell and Ellen Glasgow, there began a renewed interest in literary activity. This was a time in which Americanism was strong; the War had wiped away Southern romanticism and sentimentality. People began to hear criticisms like those from Mencken and to want to do something about them. It must have been the combination of this man and this moment and this climate which caused a small group of writers in Richmond to band together. Under a common devotion to writing in all its phases, they organized a writers' club to give them the opportunity to recognize, discuss, and criticize the literature produced by the members. This study of the Virginia Writers' Club and its progeny, a small literary magazine, *The Reviewer*, is not concerned with the literary merit or greatness of the products of these writers. It is simply concerned with presenting evidence that they did write, that they were interested enough in their writing to form and support this club. It is the existence, not the evaluation, which deserves mention.

The Virginia Writers' Club was organized on November 29, 1918,

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

under the aegis of Dr. Orie Latham Hatcher, well-known professor and sociologist. One afternoon Dr. Hatcher, realizing the presence of some literary activity in Richmond, invited Mr. James Branch Cabell and a few others to tea and to form a writers' club. Motivation for its foundation "was the desire to make Richmond an influence in the world of letters and to line it up with the other literary centers of the country."⁴

The professional and amateur writers of Richmond and its vicinity composed the membership of the club. Candidates for admission had to possess an interest in writing and had to have published at least one piece of original work. One holding such qualifications could be invited to attend a meeting, and, if he wanted to become a member, his name was submitted for membership. Mrs. John B. Lightfoot, in her amusing booklet, *A Few Minutes*, the minutes of The Virginia Writers' Club, tells of the constant plea for more members. "My memory," she states, "is very poor, but I think they said any member coming in without bringing two guests should be shot at sunrise."⁵

Simply by reviewing the lax qualifications for membership, one can deduce that the writings of the members must be in various forms and must cover unlimited subject matter. Some wrote numerous volumes; some produced only a few; and some left behind only one small volume or several articles or poems.

Several members produced writing primarily of a historical nature. Dr. Thomas Cary Johnson, a theologian, won his acclaim mostly for his historical works dealing with religious matters, especially the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Samuel Chiles Mitchell, Phi Beta Kappa professor of history at the University of Richmond for twenty-five years, was a contributor to many publications, but was best known as the editor of a volume on social life, "The South in the Building of the Nation." Dr. Hamilton J. Eckenrode wrote a great deal in connection with his being the director of the Federal Writers' Project, author of the *Virginia Guide*, and State Historian.

Other historians limited their works primarily to "Virginiana." Mrs. Mary Newton Standard is credited, says Mrs. Eudora Ramsay Richardson, former club member, with initiating interest in and future study of Bacon's Rebellion, the subject of her first book. She was also the author of several books on Edgar Allan Poe and Poe's home, Richmond. *Richmond—Its People and Its Story*, written in 1923, accomplished its purpose "to set forth the story of Richmond readably told, agreeably printed and sufficiently illustrated, in a single volume of comfortable format."⁶ In addition, Mrs. Standard contributed to various magazines an article entitled "The True Beginning of American Democracy," which appeared in the *Southern Review*, was published in the *North China Daily News*, an English periodical in Shanghai. She

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was quite surprised when she received a copy of this paper with her article in it.

Mrs. Sally Nelson Robins, for many years a writer for *The Richmond Times-Dispatch*, looked at Virginia history from a different viewpoint. Among her books are two which treat of the love affairs of famous Virginians: *Romances of Illustrious Virginians*, 1920; and *Love Stories of Famous Virginians*, published in 1923 by the National Society of Colonial Dames of America.

There were several journalists present at the meetings of the Writers' Club. Samuel Travers Clover, one of the founders of the club, was the owner and editor of the *Richmond Evening Journal* from 1916 to 1922 as well as the author of several books. He was instrumental in adding the name of another journalist to the membership list. She was Miss Vera Palmer, a reporter, feature editor and editor of the real estate page and the woman's page of the *Times-Dispatch*. Miss Palmer states that she joined the club at the second meeting because Mr. Clover advised her to do so "because he thought that they were going to get particular."⁷ Some of the members felt, it seems, that "people who write for the papers love the experience of speaking and being with the members of the club, but they don't seem to find time, nor are they interested in the type of program they have to share. They can't get anything out of the programs."⁸

A club member who combined newspaper work with writing in another field was Mrs. Emma Speed Sampson who wrote a recipe column for the paper entitled "Aunt Jemima's Column" before that name became a trade name. However, her main line of writing lay in children's books written in "darkey" dialect about a small Southern boy and his friends. Mr. Clover praised Mrs. Sampson when he wrote in his *Evening Journal* that "Mrs. Sampson knows the 'darkey' dialect as few writers do She has found her true metier in treating of the darkey characters and of their inimitable drawling dialect."⁹ According to Mrs. Richardson, the Kentucky author of a series of books entitled *Miss Minerva* died, and the publishers, after looking for someone to carry on the serial, asked Mrs. Sampson to do so. She, adds Mrs. Richardson, "having set out definitely in her sequels to *Miss Minerva* and *William Green Hill* to entertain children and adults who enjoy being children now and then, had kept close to her purpose, with the result that Richmond found her books as charming as everyone found Mrs. Sampson."¹⁰

A second writer who, states Mrs. Richardson, wrote "nothing to offend (Richmond)" was Mrs. Kate Langley Bosher, also an author of books for the young. Her "sweet little stories about *Mary Carey*, *Miss Gibbie Galt*, *The Man from Lonely Land* Richmond found delightful."¹¹

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

There was acclaim outside of Richmond also, starting in 1910 with *Mary Carey*. Eleven years later it was made into a movie and appeared on the screen under the title "Nobody's Kid." Her *How It Happened* was printed in Braille by the state of Pennsylvania for its institutions for the blind. The author of these and many other novels, Mrs. Boshier wanted simply to be listed "as merely a teller of tales, who doesn't pretend to have any other creed than to write with simplicity and sincerity, to use the English language, and to stop when I am through."¹²

Another Writers' Club member to gain national recognition was the poet Henry Aylett Sampson, husband of Emma Speed Sampson. Several of Mr. Sampson's lyric poems which had appeared in a sonnet series in the *Evening Journal* were chosen to appear in William S. B. Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse* for 1918. The newspaper revealed its pride by stating: "We felicitate Mr. Sampson on his deserved recognition and congratulate Richmond on its distinction of harboring so talented a poet. As for the *Evening Journal*, it is proud of having been the medium of giving Mr. Sampson's poetry to an appreciative audience."¹³ After his death in 1920, his poems were collected and published in a small volume simply entitled *Sonnets and Other Poems*.

Also in the field of poetry was Mr. B. B. Valentine. His poems were written in the "darkey" dialect from a darkey's point of view. They were collected and published in 1921 in one volume entitled *Ole Marster and Other Verses*. Other poets active in the early years of the club were Carter Wormeley and Dr. Beverly Dandridge Tucker, the author of many Confederate memorial verses and essays and a book of *Verses of Virginia*, published in 1923.

The most prolific and best known author in the Virginia Writers' Club was its first president, Mr. James Branch Cabell. During the years that Mr. Cabell was active, or at least interested, in the club, he published, among other books, *Beyond Life* and *Jurgen* in 1919, *The Cream of the Jest* and *Figures of Earth* in 1921, *The High Place* in 1923, *Straws and Prayerbooks* in 1924 and *The Silver Stallion* in 1926. The book for which Cabell received the most acclaim was *Jurgen*, "a fantastic, imaginative tale depicting the adventure of one restored to first youth."¹⁴ This book was condemned by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice as being an "obscene, filthy, lewd, lascivious and indecent book."¹⁵ The book was then suppressed pending the outcome of the case, during which time it sold in New York for \$50.00 a copy.¹⁶ The court decided that "the most that (could) be said about the book (was) that certain of its passages (might) be considered suggestive in a veiled and subtle way, of immorality, but the suggestions

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(were) delicately conveyed, and the whole atmosphere of the story (was) of such an unreal and supernatural nature that even these suggestions (were) free from the evils accompanying suggestiveness in more realistic words."¹⁷ Mrs. Richardson states that the book was virtually unappreciated in Richmond because it "aggravated a state of affairs that was already bad enough. When the book was temporarily banned, Mr. Cabell's local audience was quickly increased. Some got none "of the symbolism; some got the symbolism and nothing else. Both groups are still wondering what *Jurgen* was all about."¹⁸ Mrs. Richardson points out that Richmond's ignorance of *Jurgen* paved the way for its almost ignoring Cabell's later books.¹⁹

There were those in the club whose writing must be entered under the heading "miscellaneous" either because of their diversity or their uniqueness. Into the former category fall the works of Miss Margaret Prescott Montague. In spite of the fact that she was nearly blind, she managed to write poems, several novels, many essays—some of which were published in the form of small books and war stories. One of these, "England to America" received the O. Henry Memorial Prize for the best short story of 1919. "That same year 'Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge' appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* and immediately made a stir. Some critics dismissed it as patent propaganda for the cause of the League of Nations; others called it a challenge to the conscience of the country. At any rate, it created lively political excitement and bore a prominent part in the campaign of that turbulent autumn. The President of the United States sent the author a personal letter of recognition."²⁰

Dr. Orie Latham Hatcher received recognition by her participation and writing in another field. She, the co-founder of the Richmond School for Social Work and Public Health which eventually became the Richmond Professional Institute, was the author of innumerable guidance books, particularly guidance for rural boys and girls.

Dr. Henry Read McIlwaine, "the only human being Mr. Cabell ever wanted to take into the club," states Mrs. Richardson, was the librarian at the Virginia State Library for many years and was the editor of that library's edition of the Journals of the House of Burgesses and the Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia. He was also the author of *The Struggle of Protestant Dissenters for Religious Toleration in Virginia*.

Also an editor was Mrs. Edith Dabney Tunis Sale. In 1923 she edited *Historic Gardens of Virginia*, a book compiled by the James River Garden Club "before it was too late to gather up the fragments that remain(ed)."²¹

Another book appeared that year under the authorship of a Virginia

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

Writers' Club member, *The Deeper Voice*, by Miss Annie Steger Winston. In addition to being a speaker to various clubs on literary topics, Miss Winston was a contributor to magazines such as *Century* and *Outlook*, and the author of a few plays and several short stories, many of which appeared in Harper's Magazine.

It has been said that the Virginia Writers' Club was organized "about the idea of having Mr. Cabell as its president."²² He presided at the first meeting at which the guests presented "an hour of addresses, personal reminiscences and one-minute talks."²³ Stated the write-up in the *Evening Journal*, "the personnel of the company and the unique program marked this as one of the most interesting events of the winter."²⁴ From that meeting on through the meetings of the next five or six years, it was this combination of personnel and programs that permitted the Virginia Writers' Club to be somewhat of a contradiction to Mr. Mencken's accusation.

Although Mr. Cabell was not present at the second meeting on December 14, 1918, he was officially elected President of the Virginia Writers' Club. Other officers chosen at that time were: First vice-president, Miss Margaret Prescott Montague; second vice-president, Mrs. Kate Langley Boshier; recording secretary, Mr. John B. Lightfoot; program chairman, Mr. Samuel T. Clover; and membership chairman, Mrs. Mary Newton Stanard.

Often the meetings and parties of the club involved visiting dignitaries of the literary world such as Burton Roscoe, Joseph Hergesheimer, Hugh Walpole and Guy Holt. When the club had been in existence only a few months, Mr. Holt, partner in the Robert M. McBride and Company, arrived in Richmond to speak at the invitation of Mr. Cabell. Speaking on "Why and How a Book is Published," he told the club members, according to *A Few Minutes*, that "publishing, no less than marriage, is a lottery; however, marriages are said to be made in heaven, while the publisher cannot blame his failures on a kindly Providence, but has to assume the responsibility himself."²⁵

In spite of his presidency, Cabell's attendance at the meetings was sporadic. He, according to Mrs. Richardson, "genuinely anxious to be helpful and accommodating, accepted the presidency . . . (but) as soon as the club was successfully launched, he handed the reins to another, and retired to the peace of Dumbarton, which to him was infinitely more to be desired than publicity."²⁶ After this, Cabell did not often attend. Mrs. Lightfoot wrote in her minutes; "Our ex-president has sent word that if we will send him a postal notice saying when our meetings take place, he will promise not to send it back, though he says he won't promise not to fly into a rage and tear it to pieces. There is a rumor that Mr. Cabell cries himself to sleep at night because we won't

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let him be president of the Writers' Club any longer, though we were in hopes that he had finally reconciled to it."²⁷

Usually the club held its monthly, or sometimes bimonthly meetings on Friday nights at 8:15 o'clock at the Professional Woman's Building, 210 East Grace Street in Richmond, or at the home of one of the members. At this time one member would act as chairman of the program for that particular meeting. For the most part the writers took charge of the meetings in which topics pertaining to their own individual field, such as "Lyric Poetry" by Mr. Sampson and "The Building of a Book" by Mrs. Boshier, were discussed. If they wished, the members could read their latest effort and receive criticism from the others in the club. Anyone else desiring criticism, whether a member or not, could leave a typewritten and anonymously signed manuscript in a special box outside the Professional Woman's Club building. After the committee on manuscript, appointed for a month, had completed its criticism, the papers were returned to the same box for the owner to pick up.

One might wonder if the sales of these author's books ever become a topic at the Writers' Club meetings. Mrs. Richardson declares that "nothing so vulgar as sales" was ever discussed because the "most vociferous members . . . profess(ed) to be interested in art for art's sake."²⁸ She tells the story of an early member who firmly stated at a club meeting, "I am a failure, and I thank God I am a failure. At least I never stooped to commercialize my art."²⁹

Often, instead of the regular meeting, a party was given "in the home of whoever was gracious enough to supply meeting space and refreshments."³⁰ Usually elaborate entertainment was planned and provided by the writers. At one such affair a Little Theater was set up, and the club members enacted scenes from "Love Affairs in Literature." The program began with an appearance from Aladdin and his princes, included scenes from *To Have and To Hold*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Monsieur Beaucaire*, and ended with a presentation of Dante and Beatrice.

On December 27, 1923, the club took a look at itself and saw that of its forty-five members, twenty-six had published books, many of them recently. For them was given an "Appreciation Dinner" at which the "toasts were given in appreciation of the various books just published."³¹

A year or so later Hugh Walpole was invited to the Henrico County home of Mr. Cabell who "generously decided to share him with the Virginia Writers' Club . . . and invited the members to tea."³² Mr. Cabell put in the newspaper that those who had no transportation would find "convenient trains leaving Broad Street for Dumbarton at 3:40 and 4:30 o'clock."³³ After a social hour the visitors were invited up to the

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

library where the ladies formed two groups, one at the feet of Mr. Walpole, another around Mr. Cabell. Cabell, remembers Mrs. Lightfoot, was "well in the lead; for we knew (says she) he was just as notorious as anybody; and were not going to see him surpassed by any Russian-writing English man."³⁴

The most outstanding meetings, parties and visiting celebrities were described in Mrs. Lightfoot's twenty-two page volume *A Few Minutes*, which was published by the Writers' Club itself. Only a few dozen copies were sold to outsiders. The booklet included the minutes from many of the club's activities from 1919-1923. "They serve(d) the double purpose of recording what transpire(d) and portraying with incision, wit, and cleverness the manners and matters of the transpirers."³⁵ Although Mrs. Lightfoot put her tongue way into her cheek and poked light fun at the members of the club and their works, it was considered according to one member, "a privilege to be a target of her jests."³⁶ The recording secretary stated that she purposed to offend no one in her minutes which were written "with only the kindest feelings and intensions."³⁷ She went on to reveal that her first target was Mr. Cabell, whom she found "about as sensitive as the rock of Gibraltar."³⁸

The reading of these minutes termed "those scurrilous notes" by Cabell, was the highlight of many meetings. One member stated that "in most clubs there are always many to ask that the reading of the minutes be dispersed with; but the Virginia Writers' reverse the usual order by clamorous demands for Mrs. Lightfoot's records."³⁹

The Writers' Club was often aided in its entertainment and activities by people who were not formal members. Of these Miss Ellen Glasgow was the most prominent. Mrs. Richardson, when asked why Miss Glasgow was excluded from the club, replied simply, "if she were excluded, she excluded herself."⁴⁰ Mr. Glenwood Clark stated that Miss Glasgow "occasionally attended meetings of the club. In most cases (he reveals she brought along with her the current literary celebrity who happened to be her house guest at the famous Number 1, Main Street. . . . At rare intervals she would condescend to share with (the members) some of the riches of her personal memories of the great and the near great in literature."⁴¹

When Mr. Walpole was in Richmond, Mr. Cabell had to share him with Miss Glasgow who took over the entertaining of him as well as the housing of the English novelist after he left Cabell's home. For him she arranged an informal dinner and a reception at which the members of the Writers' Club were among the honored guests. Mrs. Richardson seems to think that although Richmonders in the twenties were proud of Ellen Glasgow, they did not understand her. "That one so wholly Virginian and so indisputably well-born should combine such hetero-

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doxy with realistic treatment of her state was indeed deplorable . . . They did not want the picture marred by a touch of realism. So the reason for writing *Barren Ground* has never been advanced to the satisfaction of old Richmond."⁴²

Frances Newman, the Atlanta novelist, was another outsider who was closely associated with the club. She was a frequent visitor to Richmond, where her sister lived. Another tie with Richmond and the Writers' Club in the early twenties was the mutual admiration held by her and Mr. Cabell. Evidently she was not held in as high esteem by the other Richmond writers. In 1926 Miss Newman's novel, *The Hard-boiled Virgin* caused quite a controversy in that city. Although Mr. Cabell called it "the most profound book yet written by an American woman,"⁴³ the book was, according to Mrs. Richardson, "quite too much for Richmond's Victorian delicacy and refinement."⁴⁴ She tells the story of one "dear old lady" who caught her niece reading it, threw it in the fire—with the use of tongs.

Richmond had received an earlier, and more appreciated, taste of Miss Newman's works through *The Reviewer*, a literary magazine begun in Richmond in 1921. Although there is divided opinion as to whether or not the Writers' Club itself was directly responsible for the founding of the magazine, there is agreement that the idea was brought up and planned at one of the club meetings or parties. Cabell gives the credit for its initiation to a "roomful of friendly person who had met to discuss each of one another's recent books and a moderate number of cocktails."⁴⁵ At any rate, three of the four first owners and editors, Mary Dallas Street, Emily Clark, and Hunter Staggs were members. I cannot find sufficient evidence to state that the fourth, Margaret Freeman, was a member. Cabell notes that these "four young people . . . combined literary leanings with an aggregate bank account of \$200.75, decided to found a magazine; and so the first issue of *The Reviewer* became purchasable in the February of 1921 . . ."⁴⁶ Its foreword clearly stated the purpose of the small magazine: "There is today in American letters much of the second best . . . that see neither clearly nor valourously, a second best upon which, in ambitious youthfulness, *The Reviewer* has declared war! Not success or failure, but that the impetus of our effort shall count towards distinction is our chief concern."⁴⁷

The first *Reviewers* were issued bi-monthly, published the first and fifteenth of each month at fifteen cents a copy, \$1.00 for six months. In August, after the first six months were completed, *The Reviewer*, in enlarged form, emerged as a monthly. The price was \$1.50 for a subscription for six months. The next year the magazine underwent another change and began to be published only four times a year.

Miss Clark wanted the magazine "to develop young Southern

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

writers, unhampered by provincialism or commercial requirements."⁴⁸ Among the Southern writers who contributed were many members of the Virginia Writers' Club. Cabell contributed often, as did Sally Nelson Robins, Margaret Prescott Montague and Dr. Henry R. McIlwaine. Additional writers from the South were Frances Newman, Julia Peterkin, Gerald W. Johnson, Ellen Glasgow, Mary Johnston and Henry Sydnor Harrison, who considered *The Reviewer* "a violet in the Sahara,"⁴⁹ Joseph Hergesheimer, Elinor Wylie and Carl Van Vechten were also among those who contributed to the serials, poems, essays and book reviews which provided the backbone of the magazine. These contributors were not paid for their works that were published, nor did the magazine carry much advertising. Haughtily *The Reviewer* announced upon the inside of its front cover that "the payment for such MSS as may be found available will be in fame not in specie."⁵⁰

The magazine, as well as the writers, certainly received more fame than specie. Some termed *The Reviewer* the beginning of a great Southern renaissance.⁵¹ It was the magnet that drew authors from all over to Richmond; it was discussed in literary circles everywhere except, according to Cabell, in Virginia. In *Let Me Lie* he stated that "the magazine had few, or rather it had virtually no, subscribers in Virginia. It was glanced over not without fretfulness, by an exceedingly scant number of Americans. And Richmond, after having been made somehow a literary center, did not delight in the city's unfamiliar role."⁵² He suggests several reasons why Richmond did not accept *The Reviewer*. For one thing, although the four owners and editors were accepted by the elite of the city, the many visiting literary guests particularly those from the North and especially Mencken, were not. Then too, reasons Cabell, the city had its own writers whose books were probably not read by the inhabitants of Richmond, nevertheless belonged to the city which did "not care to have them discussed by outsiders."⁵³ Perhaps the fact that Cabell himself edited the October, November and December, 1921 issues was also a factor in its not being appreciated.

This lack of recognition in its own city and state could have contributed to the magazine's demise in Richmond and transferal to Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1924. In the last issue which Emily Clark edited before she handed *The Reviewer* to Paul Green and Robert Pickens, she stated the reasons for her releasing the magazine. Although the magazine had a "moderate bank account and friendly circulation,"⁵⁴ she raised a plea for someone to take it over and enlarge it. Margaret Freeman and Mary Dallas Street had resigned "and the remaining two (she stated) have, perhaps unfortunately, become possessed with the idea that it would be more interesting to write than to edit. They are, therefore, retiring from the editorial field with this issue. We have

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made some people exceedingly angry and we have encountered blank indifference from an even larger number. We have also had an enormous amount of fun. If we had possessed either wisdom or experience we would not, quite carelessly, at a Sunday afternoon party, have launched a penniless magazine. We are happy beyond words that we lacked both wisdom and experience, for we would not have missed *The Reviewer* for anything in the world."⁵⁵

Professor Green offered to take over the magazine because he and the University of North Carolina Press had wanted to put out a magazine for some time. After Green found a man, Robert Pickens, who was financially able and willing to back it up, he went to Richmond and persuaded Emily Clark to let them take over the publication of the magazine. Green took *The Reviewer* under its original name to Chapel Hill and produced the first issue in January, 1925 with the statement that "such MSS as may be found available will be paid for."⁵⁶ However, Green found the editing of a magazine to be difficult, especially for a novice. Financial difficulties, too, caused him to write to Miss Clark that *The Reviewer* was "still walking over (his) naked back with spiked shoes."⁵⁷ A short time later the last of Green's four issues came out in October of 1925. The subscriptions were transferred to the *Southwest Review*, a merger, said Green, "just to give the subscribers something to read . . . until the subscriptions ran out"⁵⁸ or until resubscription to the *Southwest Review* could be made.

The era of *The Reviewer* was ended. These small magazines, says Donald Davidson, "got no general Southern bearing and were perhaps most valuable as a proving ground for new writers. Northern critics might call attention to them as evidence of an "awakening South; but they better exemplified the interest of individuals and groups in experiments which demanded a larger field than little magazines could provide."⁵⁹ Such an experimental group was the Virginia Writers' Club. Although the Club is still in existence, it is now an organization of primarily social function; however, present-day members have expressed a desire to renew its original purpose and activities.

Mr. Louis Rubin's statement in the conclusion of his *No Place on Earth* concerning the permanent influence of Cabell and Glasgow on Richmond might well be expanded to include the Virginia Writers' Club as a whole: ". . . there exists the shelf of books. And so there is a dimension to the life of Richmond-in-Virginia that may preserve its identity far beyond the lifetime of the present inhabitants—far beyond, even, any changes or adjustments, moral, material, spiritual, that might sometime in the future come to pass. . . . Yet for better or for worse,

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RICHMOND RENAISSANCE

there it is: life in Richmond-in-Virginia . . . transformed into the clearer image of literature. It is a kind of permanence, an identity beyond time, the hope even of immortality, treasured in a shelfload of books."⁶⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹H. L. Mencken, *Prejudices: Second Series* (New York, 1920), p. 140.

²*Ibid.*, p. 136.

³Edgar Kemler, *The Irreverent Mr. Mencken* (Boston, 1950), p. 177.

⁴*The Evening Journal*, Richmond, Virginia, January 17, 1919, p. 6.

⁵Mrs. John B. Lightfoot, *A Few Minutes*, published by the Virginia Writers' Club, 1923, p. 20.

⁶Mary Newton Stanard, *Richmond—Its People and Its Story* (Philadelphia, 1923), preface vii.

⁷Vera Palmer, interviewed by Dr. and Mrs. Marvin W. Schlegel.

⁸Edith Lindeman, interviewed by Dr. and Mrs. Marvin W. Schlegel.

⁹Samuel T. Clover, *the Evening Journal*, September 14, 1918, p. 7.

¹⁰Eudora Ramsay Richardson, "Richmond and Its Writers," *The Bookman* XVIII (New York, 1928), p. 452.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Julia Tyler Winston, "Kate Langley Boshier" in *The Library of Southern Literature*, XVII, Edwin Anderson Alderman, Charles Alphonso Smith and John Calvin Metcalf, eds. (Atlanta, 1923), p. 67.

¹³*The Evening Journal*, October 12, 1918, p. 4.

¹⁴"New York Jurist Finds No Objection to Cabell's Book" by the Associated Press in *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 20, 1922, p. 1.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 449.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Nancy Byrd Turner, "Margaret Prescott Montague" in the *Library of Southern Literature*, p. 408.

²¹Edith Tunis Sale, *Historic Gardens of Virginia* (Richmond, 1923), foreword, p. 4.

²²Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

²³*Evening Journal*, November 29, 1918, p. 6.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²⁶Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 450.

²⁷Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁸Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Extracted from letter to Mrs. Marvin W. Schlegel from G. Glenwood Clark, May 15, 1961.

³¹*Richmond News Leader*, December 22, 1923, p. 15.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³*Richmond Evening Journal*, April 7, 1920, p. 7.

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³⁴Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁵"This Club Begg for Reading of the Minutes" in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 9, 1923, no page number. Quoted from Mrs. Kate Langley Bosher.

³⁶*Ibid.* Quoted from Evan R. Chesterman.

³⁷Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁹"This Club Begg for Reading of the Minutes," *op. cit.* Quoted from Chesterman.

⁴⁰Interview with Mrs. Eudora Ramsay Richardson, August 2, 1961.

⁴¹Clark letter, *op. cit.*

⁴²Richardson, *Bookman*, *op. cit.*, p. 451.

⁴³Kemler, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴⁴Richardson, *Bookman*, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

⁴⁵James Branch Cabell, *Let Me Lie* (New York, 1947), p. 224.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁴⁷*The Reviewer* (Richmond, February 1921), foreword.

⁴⁸Jay B. Hubbell, "Southern Magazines" in *Culture in the South* (North Carolina, 1934), p. 177.

⁴⁹Kemler, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁰Cabell, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-214.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵⁴Emily Clark in *The Reviewer* (Richmond, No. 5, October, 1924), p. 407.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶Paul Green in *The Reviewer* (North Carolina, January 1925), foreword.

⁵⁷Hubbell, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁸Kemler, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁹Donald Davidson, "The Trend of Literature" in *Culture in the South*, W. T. Couch, ed. (Chapel Hill, 1934), p. 189.

⁶⁰Louis D. Rubin, Jr., *No Place on Earth* (Austin, Texas, 1959), pp. 79-80

What oil springs the rusted hinges of the mind wherein some cob-webbed corner sits the conscience of mankind.



You are the flawless crystal through which my sunshine passes and is distorted into godly passions.



Truth is the metal with which the blade of life is forged and you, the blacksmith.

—SHARON LOUISE COULTER

REACH UP IN DARKNESS

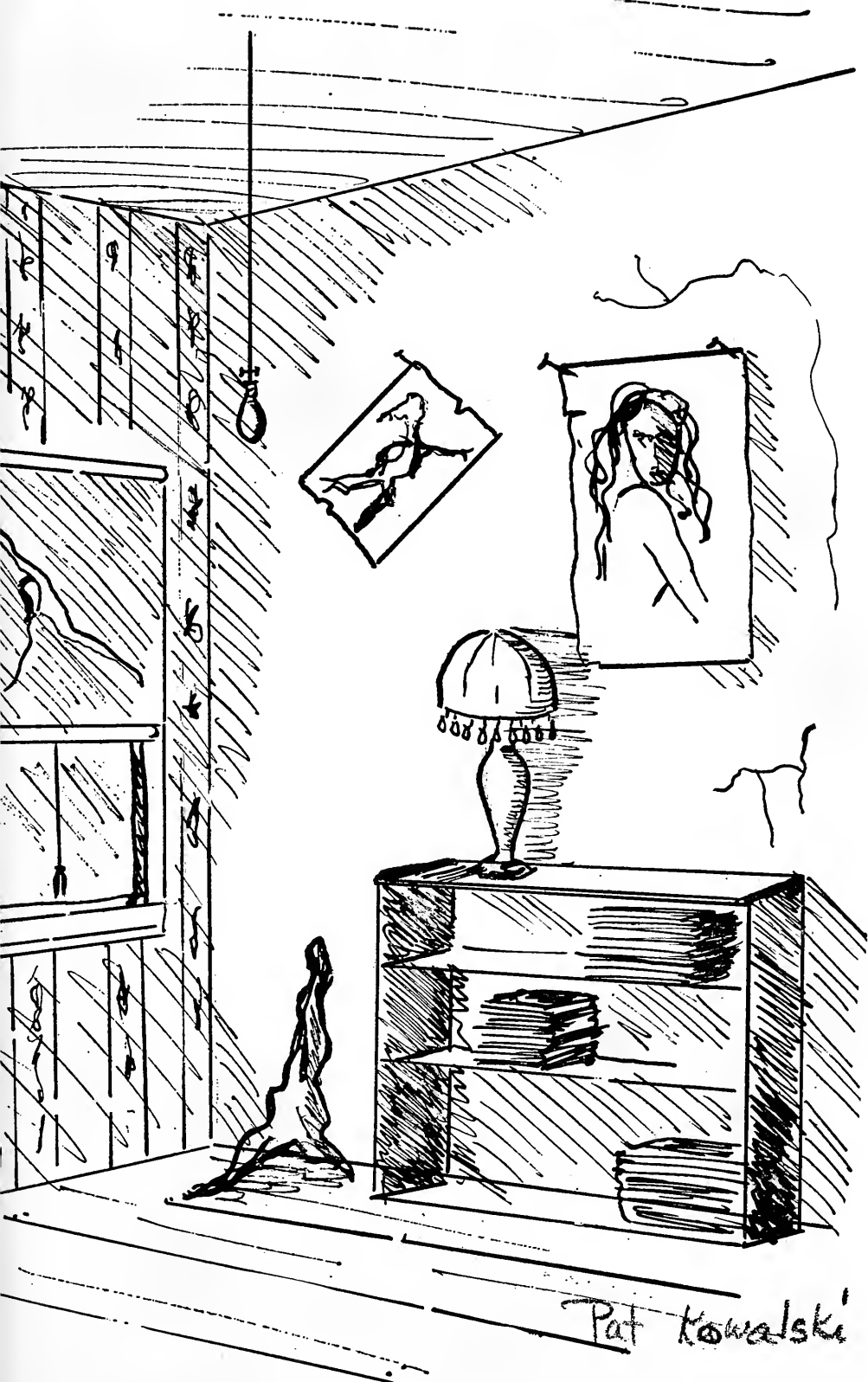
MARGARET COOKE

I could tell that my mother didn't like leaving me in the apartment I was to share with my older sister and another girl neither my mother nor I had met. I suppose it was the apartment itself that upset her most. She had frowned in disapproval when we'd had to grope our way up the narrow stairway that led in unexpected darkness to the door of the apartment. Inside there was an abundance of light from the tall old-fashioned windows; I wished there hadn't been so much when I realized the nature of the rooms. Not that they were dirty—the walls of the living room were covered with green-sprigged wallpaper of a cheap but clean appearance, and the floors were warm with the rich, waxed darkness of age. The other rooms, the tiny kitchen, bedroom, and bath, were less attractive. Their smaller windows did not give enough light to offset the darkly painted walls. They could have been ordinary rooms; I knew it wasn't their age that distressed my mother.

She probably could have accepted the apartment if it hadn't been for the pictures. Sketches of nudes were hung on one wall in the living room. There were several large abstracts in each of the rooms—rather ugly ones, I thought, with their threatening zags and blobs of dark colors. Even I had been startled by the face of a revoltingly ugly woman who seemed to leer at us from the "portrait" above the bookshelves. The artist had painted stupidity and scorn in her face. I disliked it even more than the abstracts.

There was nothing else really shocking about the apartment. A divan haphazardly covered with a dull brown spread was placed under the double windows of the living room, and several orange cushions were scattered on the floor near a large piece of unpolished driftwood propped against one side of the bookshelves. All alone against the living room's one uncluttered wall was a love seat which my sister had brought from our home. It's graceful lines gave the room an almost

(continued on page 30)



comical look; it seemed deliberately haughty and out-of-character.

My mother voiced no disapproval when she left me alone in that room, but I knew it was there. Yet this did not decrease my exuberance as I sat on the love seat and thought of the summer job I would begin the next day. I was to be an assistant secretary at the nearby college. I expected great things of the summer between my first and second years of college—I felt I was intensely alive, intensely ready for new experiences.

I left the love seat, smiling as I remembered the times I had polished its dark carved wood as a child, and I went to the double windows. A noiseless evening rain had begun, and the dampness gave the old brick sidewalks below the sheen of dark pottery. I could see the roofs of the college rising in the misted distance above buildings which lined one of Virginia's oldest streets.

"You must be Agnes' sister."

I hadn't heard the door open, and the strange girl who stood there laughed when I turned quickly to face her.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm Susie James. Glad you're going to live here and all that." She joined me at the window. "How did you like it out there?"

"It's beautiful." I spoke softly, slightly bashful at the sudden appearance of this tiny girl whose large green eyes flashed with mischief and friendliness. She smiled as she saw me notice the unusual ornament which held the heavy coils of her dark red hair in place. Motioning that I sit beside her on the divan, she removed the heavy ornament, carelessly tossing back the fallen lengths of hair from her face as if to say that it was the ornament alone that she cared for.

"It's nice, isn't it?" She held the ornament by its pointed metal stem and stared delightedly at the hollow spherical mass of intricately woven copper wire.

"Yes, I've never seen anything like it before."

"Someday the world's richest women will wear these especially made for them by my artist." She laughed excitedly, enjoying her mysteriousness. "He makes so many beautiful things—he lets me watch sometimes. He isn't famous yet, but it won't be long. Just think, honey, someday you'll be able to tell people you've met Gene Loth, the artist! Look, he lives right over there. I sleep here so I can see his lights at night."

She had propped herself on her knees there on the divan and pointed out a square stone structure barely noticeable in the cluster of larger buildings around it.

"I guess it isn't very impressive from the outside. It's very old—used to be some rich person's carriage house a long time ago. It's been

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REACH UP IN DARKNESS

renovated of course, but some people still think he's a little odd, living in a place like that. But it's beautiful inside with all his work there."

"I think it's just fine."

Somehow I'd felt she needed those words, this girl who'd told her love to a stranger like a child.

It was only a few days before I met Susie's artist. I was alone in the apartment when he entered without warning and stood just inside the doorway. I might have been frightened by his standing there silently staring in cynical amusement at my surprised face if I hadn't been so impressed by his difference. He was a very tall, thin man with a strangely old look that I remembered seeing before—it belonged to the men of an earlier century whose faces I'd seen in the shadowed tintypes of old albums. His hair was thick and black, his mustache heavy and untrimmed. I felt as if there should be a mustiness about this man whose heavy brows moved in a slight scowl before he spoke.

"The name's Gene Loth."

His laugh afterwards was hard and low, and I saw that he had known I would be surprised when he told me his name. Knowing this pleased him, flustered me, and I could do nothing but return his stare.

"Don't look much like your sister. . . Awfully young, aren't you . . .? Are you a Christian?"

"Yes . . . I suppose I am." His question startled me and I answered in embarrassed hesitation.

He laughed at my words in the same mirthless manner as before. His unusually small eyes held mine for an uncomfortable length of time, but I said nothing. His sardonic expression told me he meant to speak again.

"Bet you even feel pain."

He turned then and walked out of the apartment.

I told myself afterwards that I had been a fool to let Gene Loth's statements surprise me, that artistic people always said strange things. But I never did tell anyone about that meeting.

Susie must have felt that she should see I was entertained, because she took me places and introduced me to a lot of her friends in the time we were together. My sister worked at night, and I didn't know many other people then. So on most evenings Susie and I would eat dinner together in the apartment's small kitchen. We'd go on long walks afterwards; we were always in gay moods and the people we met smiled at the sound of our laughter.

We usually ended up at a small neighborhood restaurant where the college's art students gathered. It was always dark and smoky inside—the air heavy with the smell of cheap beer and crowded bodies. It

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wasn't a very clean place either, but no one seemed to mind. I was fascinated by the people there. Some would argue heatedly about various intellectual questions. Others, cheered by their drinks perhaps, broke loudly into song or drunken dissertations. I knew other people would have called them beatniks, but I only thought of them as Susie's friends. She'd talk to nearly everyone there before she left. I'd catch her glancing toward the door a lot, though, and I'd know she was looking for Gene.

Her friends there were always nice to me, but I was too quiet to ever be really accepted as one of them. So I was surprised that night when they asked Susie to bring me along to one of their parties. It was late, but we accepted—I was curious, and I guess Susie went because someone told her Gene would be there.

I don't know what the room was normally used for, but it didn't seem like much of a party room to me. It was completely empty except for the piles of old beer cans in the corners, and everyone who'd come just stood around talking and emptying more. I watched them, the "party-goers," and thought that an artist might have painted the scene and called it "confusion." Even though he would have been unable to convey the meaningless tense drone of the mingled voices, he could easily have captured the room's atmosphere. Confusion reigned among the numerous small clusters of gesticulating talkers and on the questioning, fearful faces. The faces seemed ever-changing and unfamiliar in the smoky dimness—though there must have been no more than sixty people there. I'd never met many of them in the restaurant before. I finally realized that they belonged to a different group—Gene's group.

He came soon, and I could tell by the hush when he entered that the people there admired him.

They weren't drunk like the others, Gene and the dark little man who'd come in behind him. They'd just stood for a while, silently watching the drift of the party. Finally I saw Gene's friend nod toward a group of men who were finding drunken entertainment in mutilating their empty beer cans. He had laughed as he pointed out one who was desperately trying to mash his with his teeth.

"There, Gene. Look at that happy fellow. Proof of our theory of nonrestraint, you know. . . Amazing how many people won't accept it."

I heard Gene's answer in the cynical tone I remembered.

"That shouldn't amaze you, Roberts. Man's a pitiful creature—wants freedom, but most of the time he never really learns what it is or what he must do to have it."

He might have said more if Susie had not come and taken his hand. I saw that he did not withdraw it, but he seemed to look at her coldly as she gave him her warm childish smile.

(continued on next page)

REACH UP IN DARKNESS

Susie went with him to the carriage house that night. I wasn't surprised when she didn't come back until early the next morning. There had been times when I'd had her morning coffee ready before she'd come home. I don't think it bothered her—my knowing she was his mistress.

She'd taken me to the carriage house once to show me Gene's work. It was very cluttered and dark inside; maybe that was why everything she showed me seemed to have a heavy, almost crude look. All the designs were made of the same copper wire I'd seen in Susie's ornament. I knew that they were skillfully done, and, yet, I could not find them beautiful. I was more impressed by the portrait of Gene that I saw there than I was by his work. The artist had used only black and white paints and had put no expression at all on the face he had drawn. The small dark eyes seemed to be set in stone.

My sister and I only lived for a month in the apartment with Susie. I never knew exactly why Agnes decided we would move; I think that perhaps she was afraid for me.

It rained the last night I was there—the hard rain of a sudden summer storm that wakes you in the night and then stops as quickly as it began. I heard them after it stopped; the apartment's thin walls could not hide the sound of the sobbing pleas I didn't want to hear.

"Gene, don't leave me. . . Take me with you to Providencetown. I'd make money for us and you could work all the time. . . You'd make so many beautiful things, Gene. I wouldn't be any bother; I'd help you, Gene. . . Please. . ."

"You mustn't ask me for this, Susie. I never encouraged you to think we would ever be married. . . I'd be a miserable husband, you know that."

The low serious voice stopped then; I heard Gene walk to the door. He must have turned back to the tiny sobbing girl once more before he left.

"I never intended that you should involve yourself this way."

I wasn't surprised when I heard the rain begin again. The sound of it comforted me a little, as if it had come to whisper its sympathy for my weakness. For I knew I, too, would leave her—this girl with her diseased love—and it wouldn't be enough just to smile when I'd see her again.

I reached up in the darkness many times that night to touch the reassuring warmth of my face. It didn't help too much, even when I remembered and was glad, glad that I could feel the pain.

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